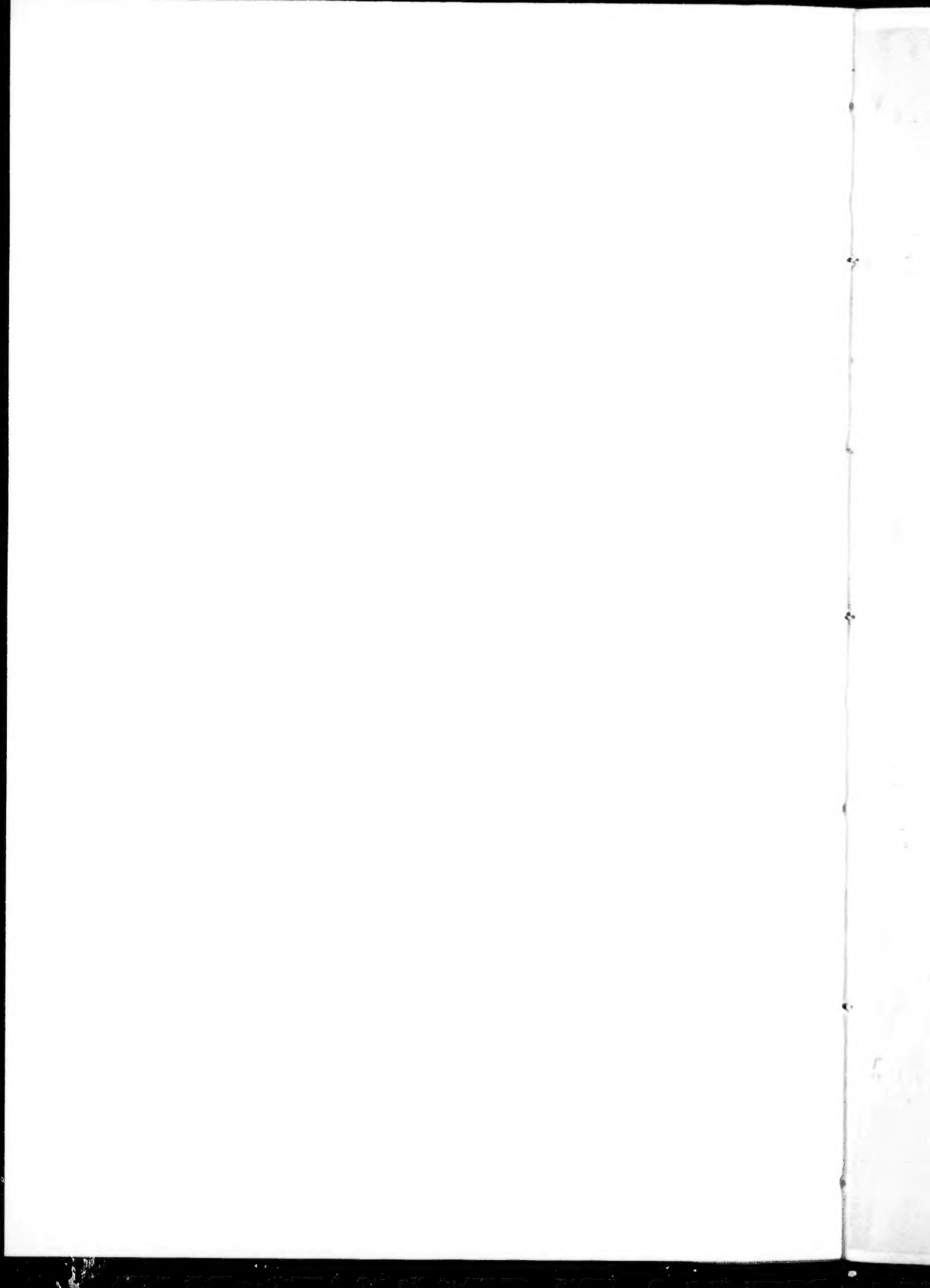




1893

LOYALTY.

A LETTER TO MCGILL STUDENTS FROM THE PRINCIPAL.

DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS,

I had hoped in the present session to be among you as usual, doing what I could officially and personally for your welfare, but was suddenly stricken down by a dangerous illness. In this I recognize the hand of my Heavenly Father doing all things for the best, and perhaps warning me that my years of active usefulness are approaching their close, and that it is time to put off my armour and assume the peaceful garb of age, in which perhaps I may yet be spared to be of some service in the world.

At the moment, I must be separated from the work that has always been to me a pleasure, and you will excuse me for addressing to you a few words on topics which seem to me of highest moment to you as students. I may group these under the word "Loyalty," a word which we borrow with many others from the French, though we have the synonym "leal," which if not indigenious has at least been fully naturalized both in English and Scottish. These words are directly associated with the idea of law and obligation, and with the trite though true adage that he who would command must first learn to obey.

I need scarcely remind you of that loyalty which we owe to our Sovereign Lady the Queen, and to the great empire over which she rules. I have had frequent occasion to note the fact that this sentiment is strong in the rising generation of Canadians, and nowhere more than in McGill. It is indeed

not merely a sentiment, though, even in a time which boasts of being practical and utilitarian, the feelings of the heart count for something. It is based also on the rational appreciation of the benefits of a rule which, while allowing the greatest freedom of individual action, secures equal rights and protection to all.

We are all, I hope, loyal to our University, and to the University as a whole, not merely to any particular Faculty of it. McGill has endeavoured, more than most Universities, carefully to adapt its teaching to the actual wants and needs of the student, whether in the matter of that general academical learning which makes the educated man, or in the special training which fits the graduate for taking his place creditably in the higher walks of professional life. To this, I think, its success has been largely due. Yet with all the breadth and elasticity of our system, we cannot perfectly meet every case, and there are still *desiderata*, the want of which is most deeply felt by those engaged in the management of the University. Our course, however, has been onward and upward; and it may be truly said that no session has passed in which something has not been added to our means of usefulness. The future, indeed, has endless possibilities, and there will be ample scope for improvement, and perhaps also for occasional complaints, when the youngest students of to-day have grown to be gray-haired seniors. You have good cause notwithstanding, to be proud of your University and to cherish feelings of gratitude and affection to the wise and good men, who, amid many difficulties, have brought it to its present position and are still urging it onward.

You should be loyal to the ideal of the student. You are a chosen and special band of men and women, selected out of the mass to attain to a higher standing than your fellows in

those acquirements which make life noble and useful. It is not for you to join in the follies of frivolous pleasure-seekers, or to sacrifice the true culture of your minds and hearts to the mere pursuit of gain. Your aims are higher, and require isolation from the outer world, and self-denial, in the hope that what you are now sowing and planting will bear good fruit in all your future lives. Live up to this ideal, and bear in mind that the self-control and habits of mind which it implies, are of themselves worth more than all the sacrifices you make.

Be loyal to the memories of home. I regret very much that McGill cannot at present offer to its students such temporary homes as college halls could supply. The time for this is coming, I hope soon. But most of you have those at home who look on your residence here with solicitude and longing, who will rejoice in your successes and perhaps be heart-broken should any evil befall you. It is customary to say that young people at college are removed from the restraints of home and its influences for good. But this need not be. To truly loyal hearts discipline should make these influences more powerful, and the thought of those who are watching you with loving hearts in distant homes should be a strong impelling motive in the student's life.

Next to home is heaven, and let me now add loyalty to Him who reigns there, and to the Captain of our Salvation made perfect through sufferings for us. Many of you, I know, are earnest Christians and growing in spiritual life as you advance in learning. To those who are not, let me say:—Read as a serious study the Life of Jesus Christ as given in the Gospels. Read it in the light of His own sayings, that “He came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many,”

and that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life." Read of His life as the Man of Sorrows, of His agony in Gethsemane, of His death on the Cross, crushed not merely by physical agony, but by the weight of our iniquities, and you may then judge if there is any obligation so great as that under which we lie to Him, any loyal service so blessed as that of the Saviour. The gate may be strait, and we may have to leave some things outside, but it is held open lovingly by the pierced hand of our Redeemer, and it leads through a happy and fruitful life to eternal joys, to that land which the Scottish poet, whose religious ideal was so much higher than his own life or the current theology of his time, calls the "land o' the leal." That happy country is near to me, but I hope separated from you by a long, useful and happy life ; but let us all alike look forward to meeting beyond the river of death, in that promised land where He reigns who said, "Him that confesseth me before men will I confess before My Father that is in heaven."

In the meantime, you remain here to pursue useful work, I go to seek restored health elsewhere, and can only remember you in my prayers. Let us hope that when the winter is past we may meet once more, and that I may be able to congratulate you on well merited success, not merely in regard to the prizes and honours which few can obtain, but in that abiding education of the mind and heart which McGill offers to all her studious children without exception.

With earnest prayer for your highest welfare and success,

I remain,

Yours sincerely,

J. WM. DAWSON.

